



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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*December 13, 2000
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*

MINUTES

Present: Bloechle, Breckner, Curry, Davis, Fox, Gieschen, Hodges, Jelinek, Kolb, Lloyd, Nolan
Brown (late), Rasmussen, Sorensen, Shepard
Absent: Berger, Carey, Grone, Holcomb

I. *Public Comment*

There was no public comment.

II. *Introductions*

Introductions were made and the council welcomed new members Dave Jelinek and Rodney Breckner.

III. *Approval of Agenda*

Monitoring Report was added as C. under New Business. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Gieschen and seconded by Fox. Motion passed.

IV. *Approval of Minutes from October 17, 2000*

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Fox and seconded by Kolb. Motion passed.

V. *Director's Report (Frank Lloyd)*

1) Case Management – VR is redefining case management and involving the associates in more of the case management functions. Many consumers drop out because follow up and regular contact is not maintained. A lot of these case management functions can be handled in the office, on the phone, in the computer system, etc. by the associates so the specialists can continue to focus on direct services. Some associates are already doing many of the case management responsibilities. VR will look at specific processes and define and document the best and most efficient way of completing them. Training people in case management will also be included.

2) Case Reviews – Don is working with a committee to determine the most important things to examine in a case review. For example, were services delivered in a timely fashion, was eligibility determined, etc. Many of these things can be looked at in QUEST (VR's data system) and some have to be reviewed manually. Once the components of a case review are determined, VR will have a schedule for staff to be involved in case reviews.

3) Relevant Input From Consumers – The satisfaction survey forms currently done by VR to get input from consumers regarding VR services always give positive feedback, but rarely give VR any direction as to what they could do differently. VR would like a mechanism of gathering input at the local level as well as getting input while people are in process. This may involve removing VR from the process of gathering that information by contracting with an outside group, so that consumers know there will be no repercussions from providing input.

4) Direct Services Delivery Agency – Other state VR agencies use a voucher system to buy services from the community. Over the past several years, VR has redefined what services they will provide, documented how the service will be provided, and helped train new staff in finding better ways of delivering those services. This has been done in the areas of orientation, job seeking skills, career planning, and job analysis. The next area that VR will be looking at is transition services. Jack Shepard will be studying the transition document and reviewing the agreement template done between VR and schools to develop some agreement on what the relationship should be between VR and the schools.

5) Employment Warranty Program – VR has not been able to fully operationalize the EW program in QUEST yet. Jack Shepard has been working with VR staff to gather information on how the system should work and has developed a document to support it. VR believes EW is a fundamental improvement to the VR system because allows them to continue working with consumers after the traditional 90 days to help them advance in employment by getting more hours, benefits, or pay.

6) New Staff Training – Don has just finished conducting Medical Aspects I training, and has developed a Medical Aspects II. These training courses each discuss six different disabilities and discuss vocational implications, assistive technology that is available, career planning for the disability, and some medical information. VR is hoping they will provide staff with a baseline of medical information about a variety of disabilities.

7) Rule 72 – The revised Rule 72 has been approved by the attorney general's and is now at Policy and Research. It should be finalized soon. The major changes are in financial participation and post-secondary involvement.

8) IPE – Focus groups are currently being put together to restructure the IPE process.

9) Ticket to Work – The proposed regulations are out and waiting for comment. It will start with 13 states with the only state in Region 7 being Iowa. At this point there is a lot of confusion about how VR will fit into it. The ticket to work program is about getting money and control of a person's employment plan back into the hands of the consumer. It puts the responsibility on the consumer to be successful. Social security is setting up a network of providers who will be able to take a ticket and charge back to social security based on a formula if the person is able to get off social security benefits. Over the next two years, other states will be phased in.

10) Mental Health Agreements – VR believes more input is needed from consumers regarding mental health services. George Hannigan from HHS, who is responsible for the DD/mental health system, has been meeting with VR to discuss the best way to get this input. The Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Council has set up an employment subgroup that will look at employment issues and getting more consumer input. Frank will continue to keep the SRC updated.

VI. Old Business

A. Council Member Changes

Due to the increased number of absences at SRC meetings, the Executive Committee sent Dave Temple and Joleen Zabawa letters thanking them for their time and terminating their membership on the council.

B. Election of Executive Committee

A motion was made by Kolb and seconded by Sorensen that Davis and Fox continue in their current roles on the Executive Committee along with the current chair (Bloechle) and vice-chair (Gieschen). Motion passed. There is currently a vacancy on the Executive Committee. Any council member wanting to volunteer for this vacancy may contact Sharon Bloechle.

C. Legislative Committee Letter

At the last council meeting, the Legislative Committee discussed writing a letter to the legislature about the benefits of employing persons with disabilities in Nebraska. The letter was drafted by Kolb and sent to the Executive Committee for review. The Executive Committee suggested that the reference to the ADA be eliminated from the final paragraph since the SRC is not an advocacy group, but an advisory group to a state agency whose purpose is employment of people with disabilities. The primary focus of the letter should be about employment. If legislation regarding the ADA is developed, the SRC could at that time decide whether or not to support it. Kolb disagreed with this suggestion and asked that it be discussed by the council.

It was suggested that a separate letter be developed to support issues such as the ADA. Focusing too much on the ADA in the letter regarding employment may send the wrong message to employers that they should hire people with disabilities because of the ADA, not because they are qualified. Kolb indicated for the record that it is never his intention to hold the ADA over employers heads as a means of getting employment. He believes the ADA is important to provide for independent living. The council agreed to take the ADA reference out and ask the Legislative Committee to write a separate letter regarding the ADA.

It was also suggested that the quote from Marriott regarding the minimal accommodations be highlighted. Other minor wording changes were suggested by the council. The letter will be printed on SRC letterhead and distributed to members of the legislature and the governor.

VII. Reports

A. Committee Reports

Client Service Delivery – At the last SRC meeting, the committee invited VR staff to attend and provide information regarding the orientation process. They will be asking other VR staff to attend the next meeting to provide information about the satisfaction surveys. They want to discuss how to use local support groups as a way of getting input from consumers, and well as identify other ways of surveying clients on a local level. Ideas currently being discussed are sending out cards when clients have completed the eligibility process, or after the planning process. They've also discussed contracting with someone to select at random consumers to call for input. The general consensus is that the satisfaction cards are not adequate, and that consumers need to have the opportunity to offer input before their case is closed. The committee will continue exploring other options and gathering input from VR staff.

Interagency Outreach – Shepard reported that the committee had scheduled Janet Miller from Career Solutions to present at this meeting but due to the weather she had to cancel. Karen Mosier from the NE Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been scheduled to present at the February 13 meeting. They've asked Michelle Davis, current SRC member, to present information to the council at the April meeting regarding her organization.

The State Transition Advisory Council has developed recommendations for graduation requirements for students with disabilities. In the past, some schools have not allowed students with disabilities to go through graduation ceremonies with their peers if they are going to continue to receive special education services until they are 21. A draft policy has been done regarding this issue and they have gotten feedback. They will be taking the policy and the feedback to a subcommittee, and then to the Transition Advisory Committee. A recommendation will then be made to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). The feedback so far seems to indicate that people like it as a standard, but do not want it put into policy or rule.

Legislative Committee – Kolb reported that the committee asked him to draft a letter in support of the ADA in terms of employment and send it to the council for review. This letter would be sent to the legislature separately from the other letter discussed by the council. Kolb agreed to draft a letter and send it to the committee for review, before sending it to the council for approval.

B. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

Since the last meeting, CAP has received five cases. Rasmussen identified the reason for each case and the current status.

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

The SILC will be 1) concentrating on legislation during the next few months; 2) continue to make plans for developing a center for independent living in the McCook area; 3) look at making changes to how the current system handles care aides in the state. The council is looking at the Kansas model of assisted living where care aides are obtained by the center's for independent living.

VIII. New Business

A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

For the benefit of new members, Don provided the following history regarding this agenda item:

Approximately 79% of VR funds are federal. In order to get the federal money, VR develops a state and a strategic plan which has to be approved by the federal government. In the past, VR has had not been able to get input from the SRC on the state plan issues based on the short time frame in which it is due. Therefore, the SRC has had little opportunity to help VR in developing the state and strategic plan. Because of this, VR has tried to identify other ways of involving the SRC in planning. One of the ways is to identify at each administrator meeting some issues which can be put on the agenda at the next SRC for discussion. Following are two such issues:

1) Individuals Plan for Employment (IPE) – VR is required by the federal government to develop an IPE for all clients. The current IPE form is not very usable by clients because the information on the form is not very helpful. Since the Rehab Act allows clients the option of developing the IPE on their own, VR would like to come up with a new form that is easier for clients to use and have instructions available on how to do it.

VR will be conducting focus groups around the state to gather suggestions from clients, parents, etc. for changes to the IPE. The mediation center will be facilitating the focus groups and will be developing a list of questions to be used at all meetings. In order to get as much participation as possible, VR will try to use groups that are already meeting

such as support groups. SRC members are invited to participate in the focus groups. VR will send out information regarding dates, times, and locations to the SRC as soon as it is available.

2) Vouchers/Payments to Clients – Currently, when VR is paying for a service for a consumer, they pay the vendor who is providing the service. For example, VR would pay a school for tuition, and a store for tools or work clothing. VR is considering changing their method of payment and giving the money directly to the client to pay for the services, in an effort to operationalize informed choice and consumer control. What do SRC members see as advantages or disadvantages to moving toward this method of operation?

Disadvantages – fraud (consumer not using the money for what it was intended); might set people up for failure if they haven't learned yet how to manage money

Advantages – more self esteem for the consumer; greater flexibility in choosing vendor; consumers are not singled out at stores because they are paying differently; less paperwork

Most SRC members agreed that it might work if some level of accountability for individuals who may not yet have the skills to manage money could be built into the process. For example, if the consumer spends the money on something else, they do not get additional funds for the continued services until they can find the funds to buy the service they originally needed. Consumer choice is fine until the decisions they make affects them being able to go to work. Sorensen suggested that a majority of cases would not involve fraud if VR is able to provide consumers with the information they need ahead of time and let them know the consequence of misusing the funds. Kolb suggested VR check into other states who have moved toward a voucher system and see what kind of success they have had, and what level of accountability was built in.

VR may implement a pilot project this fall with tuition, books, fees, etc. Plans for this would have to begin in April. Draft policies developed during the next few months will be sent to the SRC for comment.

B. New Member Training Report

The new members reported that new member training, while overwhelming, was very helpful in learning about VR and the SRC. The ATP presentation was extremely worthwhile and enlightening.

C. Monitoring Report

Rod King, the State Representative for Rehabilitation Services, interviewed Sharon about how the SRC was doing and what kind of relationship the SRC has with VR. Sharon reported on the SRC's activities and indicated that VR continuously tries to involve the SRC in providing input on policy and state plan decisions.

IX. Presentation – Career Solutions, Inc. (*Janet Miller*)

Ms. Miller was unable to be present due to the weather conditions, so Theresa Hodges from the Parent Training Center provided the council with the following information:

Career Solutions received a grant for service coordination. The grant will allow them to provide free service coordination to 25 area students in an effort to show how important service coordination is and what a difference it can make in a student's life. Eventually, they want to be able to take the information and training developed regarding services coordination statewide.